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Letter, 1977 Sept. 24, from Eva Jessye to Gene DeGruson

Eva Jessye

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THE EVA JESSYE AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC COLLECTION
FREDERICK STEARNS BUILDING
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48105

727 Miller Avenue,
Ann Arbor, Mich. 48103

Sept 24, 1977

3/3-663-2274
Dear Mr. DeGruson:

I thank you for recent correspondence. I just returned from Atlanta where I consulted with the Georgia Council on the Arts and Humanities. We are hoping that I will be summoned to serve as Artist-In-Residence at a number of schools in Georgia, particularly Atlanta, sometime this winter.

Because of this prospect, It is necessary that an agreement covering my stay and production of 'Paradise Lost & Regained' at Pittsburg State University be signed at this time. This agreement covers expenses, travel and accommodations, food... It is expected that the sponsor also grant an honorarium...a modest one acceptable.. and need not be stated in the agreement. It would work for convenience that I stay on campus, since rehearsals will be necessary all during the day and sometimes at night as required to serve those who find it impossible to attend rehearsals during day. It is likely that the larger group will rehearse at night.

There are a number of things mentioned in your letter that demand a reply or comment. I shall do my best to cover them. I am pleased with your compliment on 'MY SPIRITUALS'...unfortunately it did not bring much financial returns..it was a bit ahead of its time..and the wrong publisher..it was also priced too high for that period.. separate numbers would have sold better...and now each song would bring almost as much as the entire book brought then. It then sold for \$2.50 .which the public considered too high! Imagine!

Thank you very much for the copyright information...so valuable. Nothing could possibly warm my heart as much as the enthusiasm on your campus..I think I can endure years longer because of it(God cooperating). And thanks, also, for the list of books and records sent. I will add to it right along, and I now ask a favor ..please have printed stationery which I may use in sending out appeals to those I know will respond with donations of books, music, records, etc.. I have learned that personal requests bring more results. I wish to get at this as soon as possible. You will of course use an appropriate format in the stationery heading.

I think I may find a hidden copy of 'MY SPIRITUALS' and if so, will send it along for the Collection. I will also send programs which should prove of interest to the Music Department. ..

I just talked with you..and I hope cleared up certain points re Paradise. Satan, God, the Son may be white or black of whatever.. and it is good to have one Narrator white, one black. if possible. But they must be exceptional..we will see to that on arrival. You will note in the script that lines by the various characters are

indicated. There are several places where the Father will sing, if he can sing...these are brief, simple strains and will pose no trouble. Dancers are both male and female...on occasion. Wish to advise that I do not use the 'A' in my name..haven't for years..so do omit it...

I hope you succeed in getting copy of the 'Hallelujah' film...this is off the record..I did not get one cent for the music..some of it original.. and no credit for arrangements. In his book, "A Tree is a Tree"..Vidom did not mention my name...it is quite a story..which I shall relate while on campus.. During those days of no union protection the composer and performer were fair game ..were they black or white.

Returning to 'Paradise'... I was sure I submitted a page re the instrumental portion. The Prelude is to be by a string ensemble.. Introduction to the oratorio is by a brass ensemble..trio or more.. playing 'O PARADISE'...(the well-known hymn)....then immediately into the opening of the oratorio...'LOOK AWAY IN THE HEAVEN'...etc..Narrators.. Dancers... Paraders...

Accompaniment during the entire work is by TWO PIANOS...organ...and tympani.... CHIMES...et c. whatever else is feasible..such as violin..cello.. trumpet..at various times..as suggested by the action in the script.

Now, as for suggestion of using a poem in the program... perhaps 'THE SINGER'....as opens 'My Spirituals' would be appropriate.. Yet, 'BLACK AND UNKNOWN BARDS' by James Weldon Johnson(black) would be especially striking...what do you think? Would there be any way to use both...? I think Johnson's the better of the two..speaking honestly.

Your typescript arrived safely and excellently done. No changes that I see now... We will keep in touch and I will welcome any suggestions.

Sincere appreciation.

